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Subject: The Way of Coming to Christ.

PLYMOUTH PULPIT:

A Weekly Publication

OF

SERMONS

PREACHED BY

HENRY WARD BEECHER.

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PLYMOUTH PULPIT.

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THE WAY OF COMING TO CHRIST.

SUNDAY MORNING, MARCH 14, 1869.

INVOCATION.

THOU hast opened the day, and given the sun to go forth and shed light, and hope, and cheer, and gladness. Art not thou brighter and warmer, O Sun of Righteousness? May we not come forth into thy light from our darkness? May we not, this morning, stand up effulgent as the children of light, rejoicing in our God? Are we not beloved of thee? Why should the children of the King be in such poverty, and in such sorrow, and as exiles? Wilt thou not to-day clothe us with thine own royalty? Give us this morning a taste of the blessedness of the heavenly estate, and lift up our hearts above drudging care, and inspire us with higher and nobler conceptions of love and duty. And grant that all our souls may go forth to-day to meet the King. And may we rejoice that the King is our Father. We ask it for Christ's sake. *Amen.*

"AT that time Jesus answered and said, I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes. Even so, Father: for so it seemed good in thy sight. All things are delivered unto me of my Father: and no man knoweth the Son, but the Father; neither knoweth any man the Father, save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal him. Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light."—MATT. xi. 25–30.

HERE the Saviour assumed his judicial character; and in the context he had been denouncing the cities for their great wickedness. Then he seems, as it were by a noble absent-mindedness, to have forgotten the human part that he was enacting, and to have risen into the consciousness of his divine nature. There is not a man that ever lived who could utter respecting himself this 27th verse—"All things are delivered unto me of my Father: and no man knoweth the Son, but the Father; neither knoweth any man the Father, save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal himself"—no man among the greatest names of antiquity could have repeated, and no man among the greatest names of modern times could repeat, such words as these respecting himself, without being felt to be a supreme egotist, or else a hopeless fanatic. But such language in the Lord Jesus Christ seems eminently fit—just as fit as it seems for a king to wear a crown.

Renan and others depict the Saviour as a gentle enthusiast in his early life, but growing at length, by force of circumstances, to be a fanatic. A very noble fanatic they make him out to be; yet a fanatic. But words have lost their meaning when Christ is called a fanatic. He was never so rich and human as in the culminating scenes of his life; never so loving; never so full of sympathy for others, and of sorrow for their doom. Witness his weeping over Jerusalem. Witness the miracles of healing which he performed during the last scenes of his life. If fanaticism means large-heartedness, self-forgetfulness, pity, sympathy, love in the most exquisite tenderness, the most gentle submission to the inevitable, the grandest patience under trial, simplicity and calmness under the dissolving pains of an awful death, then blessed be enthusiasm. But such a sense as that is revolutionizing language—not changing the verity of God manifest in the flesh.

If, then, to use the words that I have quoted, in any other than one who is divine would be the supremest egotism, what shall we say of the next words, "Come unto me, ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest"? What shall we say of that imperial *I*? After such words as these, may not a soul that is seeking its God go to Jesus? Need any man fear that he will stumble into idolatry if he gives all that the heart can give to another to this person? Need one be afraid of going to Christ, and of stopping there?

If there be a truth clearer than another, it is that men can not attain to safety or peace, to purity or strength, of themselves. Except by the personal influence of God's nature on ours, we can not reach our higher manhood. "Without me," God says, "ye can do nothing."

It is equally true that Jesus Christ is just that presentation of the divine nature which men can understand; which is adapted to their urgent necessities; which they can sympathize with; and which they can seize and retain. Christ is put forth as the supremest chieftain to man; and men are gathered about him as clans gather round their head. They are to be fired with zeal and enthusiasm. Just as men feel for their generals, for their heroes, an enthusiasm which makes hard things easy, which gives to the soul-feelings an impetuous current, a zeal, and an enthusiasm, and which enlarges, ennobles, and empowers the whole being—so men are to be attracted and inspired by the relation which they sustain to its God.

The New Testament puts the evidence of the reality of Christ in the moral consciousness of men. We are to come to Christ; we are to have this zeal of personal adhesion to him; and this—namely, the experience of personal love—will be the evidence of his existence, of his power, and of the reality of the Christian life. And it will be an evidence which will supersede all others. This is the moral philoso-

phy of the New Testament. Man can not rise to his true manhood without God. Jesus Christ is that aspect and presentation of God which is adapted to man. And the evidence that there is such a being as Jesus Christ is to be found not speculatively, but by a personal adhesion, enthusiastic and intense, to him. And this will work such a result in one that no man can doubt that he is a changed man, and that there is a power of God in Christ Jesus that changes him. In other words, it is not the concatenation of intellectual logic that proves the divinity of Christ. It is the peculiar logic of affection. It is moral reasoning, in distinction from mere intellectual speculation. This is the highest proof of Christ's divinity.

The subject that I shall further unfold, then, this morning, is, *Coming to Christ, and the Way of Coming.*

Go back, now, to our text. Pause for a moment on one inflection of thought—"Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you"—that is the mode of coming—"and learn of me." In brief, Christian character, Christian duties, and the Christian spirit are to be at once taken up, and a personal Christ is to be sought while you are in the act of obeying the commands of this Christ. If you would find Christ, do not undertake to find him first, and then undertake Christian life and duty afterward. Begin Christian life and duty now, and find him in the act or struggle of this life. Begin at once to cultivate a Christian feeling; and if you can not attain to it, that is the ground and reason of appeal for help. Christ is better disclosed in the effort to live Christianly than he is by any other mode of approach, or by any other endeavor to find him.

The more plainly to perceive this line of thought, let me mark and criticise the various methods of coming to Christ by which men have sought to find him, or to come into personal relations with him.

The first and most obvious is Christ historically sought. Men are taught to read their Bibles. Then they are enjoined to think upon the things which they read. Then they wait to see what happens. We throw seed into the ground, and do nothing more. The ground takes care of it; and by and by it begins to sprout. Men have a vague impression that the Bible is just of that kind, and that you are to take a handful of its truth, and throw it inward, and then wait to see if it comes up, thinking that there is some secret and hidden power by which it will sprout and grow. There are a great many persons that have no very distinct conception of Christ but this: that there are some favored ones who may come into personal relationships to Christ, and that when they have come into such relationships they are very happy, and have "got religion," as the expression is. And they go to their Bible, prefacing the act with a short

sigh, and wish that they might become Christians. And then they read one, two, three, four chapters, and wait and see if they feel any better. They do not know as they do; and so they go back at evening and read some more Bible, just as if it were medicine taken; and they watch to see what the result is on themselves. There is this impression, that in the New Testament there is a power given to the letter such that, if a man will only take enough of it, and take it long enough, it will by and by, some how—they do not know how —work out in them a power of conversion which will bring them to a state in which they shall see the ineffable Christ, and rejoice in him.

Far be it from me to say that the word of God is not without its power and influence in the revelation of Christ. If the letter ministers to you the power of rising above itself; if it gives you understanding and food on which you can work; and if you have the gift of imagination by which you can construct, out of the material which the New Testament gives you, a vivid and living Saviour, then the New Testament helps you. Otherwise it does not.

We are to love Christ. He is our Lover. We are to fall in love with him.

It is, for State reasons, convenient, often, that princes of governments should marry princesses of other governments without the parties meeting—or it used to be so. In lieu of a personal interview, each respectively had his or her portrait painted, and sent it to the other. And who will say that that was not a great deal better than nothing? If I were the prince, and my Spanish intended I could not see, and I yet was affianced to her, I would thank the painter that would give me this faint semblance. But, after all, this effigy, what is it but the merest film of color, that gives me some conception of how she looks, or how she wants to have me think she looks? It is a help to me; but can I fall in love with that? With my imagination stimulated by it, I might form some fancy-figure, and give to it some artificial character. And then in a day-dream I might feel the pulse of love. But, after all, would it be any thing more than the filmiest of feelings?

By and by the parties come together; and then, if they be noble persons, and worthy of each other, oh! how different is the intercourse of thought with thought, of enthusiasm with enthusiasm, of affection with affection, from that of the simple outward representation of the persons! How life dispossesses the mere shadow of life! And when you can see the thing itself, how quickly you turn away from the mere representation of the thing!

The New Testament is but a mere book of symbolizations. It simply describes certain things of Christ that happened thousands of

years ago, out of which we can form some conception of a being. But if ever you are to come to Christ, there must be some way in which he shall become to you a living Christ. There must be some way in which your heart consciously shall have vibrations in consonance with his heart. Although the letter has its uses, and although it is blessed by the Spirit of God to bring men to Christ, in its own way; yet the ordinary way in which men seek to learn Christ by reading the Bible, as it were putting themselves into the Bible, and setting themselves over the fire of devotion, so to speak, and simmering, with the hope that at last they will be penetrated with such a flavor of Christ that they will have a perfect knowledge of him—this mechanical notion, this notion of the *cuisine*, as I might almost call it, is false and misleading.

The children of Christian parents, that have been educated to a reverence for the Bible, are very apt to fall into this notion, and to suppose that all that can be done is to read the Bible enough, and then to wait for God's sovereignty to convert them. *So* no one goes to Christ. He not merely says, "Come unto me," but he tells you how to come—"Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me." You are to find Christ in practical emergencies. You are to find Christ in a course of action.

Do I cast away the Bible? No. But the Bible is like a telescope. If a man looks *through* his telescope, then he sees worlds beyond; but if he looks *at* his telescope, then he does not see any thing but that. The Bible is a thing to be looked through to see that which is beyond; but most people only look *at* it; and so they see only the dead letter.

The second mode of attempting to find Christ which may be criticised, is where men seek to come to him speculatively, or by the mere help of the understanding. No man comes to Christ at all without the understanding; and there is in all right ways of preaching our invisible but living God, a practical interplay of the intellect. Therefore, what I criticise is not coming by thought-power, but coming exclusively by thought-power, and by thought-power in its philosophical abstractions. There are many who seek to come to Christ by a theological analysis of his character. To analyze the divine character is very well after you have come into a unity of moral consciousness with God. In other words, to turn back and analyze experience; after you have entered upon an intercourse, then to give further food for moral feeling by enlarging the bounds of probable truth—this is very wise. But it is not the mode of *finding;* it is one mode of cultivating acquaintance; but it is not the mode of *making* acquaintance. There are very many persons who have no conception of any Christ, except a Christ of systems—not the Christ

of our text. Men attempt, by controversial investigation, to make their impressions more vivid; to give more accuracy to their ideas; to limit and curtail. They are very laborious in fixing Christ's place. They are exceedingly conscientious in measuring the moral quantity of his being. The question of relation to the Father, and to the Spirit, has in their minds an utterly irrelevant proportion. They examine all objections with a critical eye. They attempt to construct by intellectual processes the notion of Christ; and then they try to feel as though they were acquainted with him. This is absolutely artificial in method and usually false in result. Although they do not intend it, yet, comprehensively regarded, this theological mode of constructing God is supremely conceited. It takes it for granted that men have the power to put the lines of latitude and longitude upon the orb of divine being; that men are in possession of all the elements which go to constitute a heavenly being; that, while our own being is the type of that which we are to find out, we have in ourselves every thing which belongs to a higher being. No man can form a philosophical conception of God which is perfect, which he can round out and present to the world, and of which he can say, "That is God—just that, and no more."

To hear sects disputing; to listen to their arguments; to witness the burnings of men, the rancor of their books, and the burning of their hearts toward each other, you would be led to suppose that it was the easiest thing in this world to fashion an ample and satisfying conception of the divine nature: but it is the problem of eternity, and not the problem of earth.

Who can find out a being by a pure process of thought? You can not find out each other so. No man can come into acquaintance with man in that way. You must come into the knowledge of your fellow-men sympathetically. That is to say, feeling must interpret feeling; taste must interpret taste; moral sentiment must interpret moral sentiment; intellection must interpret intellection. No man gets acquainted with men except by living intercourse. And is it possible that we should know a higher being than man by purely speculative processes?

Suppose a man, in seeking the companionship of the woman that is to be his life-long and trusted friend, should proceed by a purely intellectual method. Being a philosopher, he sends to know her exact height, and her exact weight; and then, applying the principles of physiology, he determines that in that height and in that weight there is so much solid and so much liquid in the construction of the body. He analyzes all the organs—the brain, the lungs, and the various tissues and constituent parts—and says to himself, "This charmer of my soul is the sum total of all these organs." And then, that he may be in-

formed with the spirit of humanity, he, as a mental philosopher, analyzes all the faculties that go to constitute, psychologically considered, a human being, and makes an inventory of them. Taking first a physiological, and then a psychological inventory of all that goes to constitute this beloved charmer, he puts them together, and tries to fall in love with the result.

Did you ever know one person to fall in love with another philosophically? Is not philosophy the last thing that has to do with it? Do not men fall in love by the heart, if at all? They never fall in love head-first, but always heart-first, if the love is good for any thing.

Shall it be so in respect to those that are of your own sphere, or your own level; of those who are easily accessible; whose attributes you can look down upon, as it were, and interpret? shall it be impossible for you to come into an intimate acquaintance with them except by the interplay of heart-life between you and them? and shall we undertake to enter into the acquaintance of the Invisible and the Infinite by a speculative conception which we project against a vain philosophical background? Can any man become acquainted with the divine nature in that way? Yet, how many hundreds of pulpits are marveling that they are barren! They are astonished because they have defined Christ, because they have weighed him, because they have measured him, because they have fathomed his sonship, because they have made known the enlightening influence of the Holy Ghost, because they have marked the difference between Arianism and Arminianism, and the difference between Unitarianism and Trinitarianism, because they have explained all the points of Calvinism—because they have done all these things, and more, and yet people do not become Christians! And then, they think it is because of the hardness of men's hearts; that it is because men are depraved.

No person will come to Christ who does not find some way of coming by taking his yoke. It is not by taking a speculative measure of the divine nature that men are to come. There is a yoke to be taken.

Then there are those who seek Christ by a sentimental and humanitarian method. I can hardly trust myself to describe them. It is scarcely ever wise for one to attempt to describe that which he holds in contempt; and I certainly hold in great contempt the sentimental followers of Christ—these men that pat Jehovah on the back, and patronize Christ, and think he was a good man—an excellent man—considering the age in which he lived, and the fact that he did not sit under their ministry! He had faults; all have faults; but still he was the elder brother of the race! A large being was his, and he was a very cultivated man, considering that he had not the advantages of

modern refinement and scientific investigation! Most humane was he; and, as far as he was right, he is to be our pattern! To be a Christian means not to believe in Christ mainly, they think. One distinguished clergyman in New-York has even declared, in print, that one of the best Christians he ever knew was a person who said he was conscientiously obliged to decline believing in Christ. I can not restrain my contempt for this kind of trifling. This sentimental notion of making Christ a *nothing*, in order that he may come nearer to you, and be more like you, is the annihilation of every thing that touches the human soul with enthusiasm.

Is there any thing in this sentimental humanitarianism of Christ that will fire zeal? I might like to know such a person; but I would not put myself out of the way to know such a one. I might feel that if the world were filled with people that were like such a one, it would be a much better world. But that which I need in the great battle of life is a power with God. Of men I have enough; and of human heroes enough; but they can not help me. They have their own load to carry. They have their own burden, and their own sin. I need a divine fire. I carry a pride that will not submit to a man; and I need something higher than myself in my conflict with pride—with passions burning to the lowest hell. Shall human tears assuage the flame, or extinguish the burning coals? Are there not men here who, being weakened, oppressed, and goaded by the various influences of life, have felt that they carried hell with them, and that their faculties might almost be demonized, and called fiends? And amidst the conflicts of men in the world, is it enough for us that there is a mild and gentle creature somewhere far away that looks with sympathy and compassion upon us? I need some one that can touch me to the bottom of my soul. I need some one that shall speak to me out of eternity. I need some one that has infinity of power, and with whom I am in sympathy.

The poetic and mystic conceptions of coming to Christ lie open to precisely the same line of reasoning. There are very many who have a vague aspiration. They long for Christ as they long for pictures; as they long for beautiful scenery. They think that the true conception of Christ is eminently poetic; and their heart loves to have day-dreams in this matter. In a Christian experience, when the other grounds and the other elements of it are established, then the poetic instinct becomes an enriching element not only, but a very helpful element; but alone it has in it nothing that can touch the soul's deeper faculties.

At last, hear the Saviour himself declare, "He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me." Hear him say, "If any man will do my will, he shall know of the doctrine

which I teach." Hear him say, "Come unto me, take my yoke; learn of me, and ye shall find rest unto your souls." What is the mode then, of coming to the Saviour? How are we to come to Christ? I reply that we are to come to him through a series of moral practical endeavors to live the life which he has prescribed for us.

For example, let a man begin to love God—for there is a point which is common to every one. There is not a man living that believes in a personal God who does not admit that we ought to love God; and I suppose there is no honest and intelligent man who would not admit that he does not love God as he ought. If one, then, desires to come to Christ, let him, in the first place, begin to love God. And what will be the result of the first endeavor? It will be vacuity; it will be emptiness. Let a man lift his thoughts up, and attempt to love, if he wants to know how empty he is. A man has flattered himself that he is a moral man, a very good man, an excellent man; but now let the command of God come to him, "Love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and soul, and mind, and strength." Now, let a man, on Sunday and on week-days, at morning and at evening, honestly, and in godly sincerity, attempt to love God, and see how utterly empty he is of that disposition. How void the experience will be! You think you could do it; but try to do it. You think that you could do it, and that you do do it sometimes; but now let your heart ascend. Put it upon that one experience. Grasp in your thought some such conception of God as that your heart rises up toward him in a glow of triumphant affection. Enable yourself to say, if you can, "O God, thou knowest that I love thee!" And the result of that first struggle will be that you will be convinced that the love of God is not in you. You will be convinced that your soul has been trained in the other direction. While it may have the dormant elements out of which this love may spring, you will be convinced by your past life, by the whole course and career of your past experience, that you have been void and empty of the love of God. Now, let a man that is in earnest say, "Yet this is my duty, and to this I will attain;" let him in an agony, if need be, of desire, in a purpose that will not be turned aside, say, "I *will* break through, and I *will* love my God;" let him go to Christ and say, "I take this yoke"—for it is a yoke; "I take this burden"—for it is a burden; "I am weak and pulseless; my thoughts are wandering; but I have come to prove thee, Lord Jesus—if there be a Lord Jesus. Thou hast said, 'Take my yoke;' and here it is. I take the yoke of a loving God; and that I may find rest in my soul, reveal thyself to me."

That is one step in coming toward God, and toward the loving Christ. Begin to love men benevolently. If we love those that love

us, what thank have we? Even the heathen do that. Begin to love men that are not lovable. Begin to love men that are outside of your family relationships, outside of your business affinities, and outside of your race affinities. Begin to look upon mankind as one brotherhood; and have in yourself the evidence and outflow of that benevolence which takes in universal being. I do not mean that you are to do this in your leisure and sentimental hours: I mean that you are to go forth to-morrow morning, and manifest this benevolence in your daily affairs. Let the physician in the scenes in which he must mingle carry with him warm and strong the affluence of that beneficence which Christ carried. Let the rivalries of business not check this. Go forth to your store, to your pursuits, to your station, whatever it is. Go wherever you please; among the ignorant, the poor and the lowly, or among the high, and the strong, and the lawless; go among men that are mean, that are wicked, that are bad men; go among all men; and still have this witness in yourself, "I carry, as God does, a heart that shines out toward them: I am like the sun that shines on the reptile and the gazelle; upon the deadly-nightshade and the violet. I am like God, in that I carry the spirit of love to every human being." Begin to carry that spirit. How much have you of it? How much is it subject to your volition? How far have you gone on in that way? Prove yourself. You can not take the first step. If you attempt to take it, you will come back with this testimony, that he who carries that spirit must constrain the tendencies of his nature. All the flood of feeling goes the other way. We love ourselves first. Then we love distributively those that are ours by connection and kinship. But the feeling grows fainter and fainter as we go on; and in respect to the great world, men live substantially as animals, with various envyings, and jealousies, and rivalries, and contentions, and uncharitable thoughts, and rejoicings in evil instead of good, and all manner of scandals and caustic remarks. Men do not love men.

Now, straighten yourself up, my brother that wants to know the way to Christ. Begin by loving God. And then step out to-morrow and begin to love your fellow-men. Ah! you will find Jesus in the wilderness. I will not hold up before you any incomprehensible doctrine; but I urge upon you the truth that all men are to love each other, which you understand as well as I do. I declare that all men are to be to you dear, and that it is to be your disposition to do them good; to help them; to bear with them; to weep with them, rather than to make them weep; to suffer for them, rather than to make them suffer; to make them rich, rather than to increase your own riches at their expense. No man can try to awaken in himself this disposition but he will soon find that Christ's burden and yoke is on

him, and that it is a burden too heavy to be borne, and a yoke most galling to the neck of unregenerated selfishness. Now say, in the silence of the night, or in the silence of your own thought, "Lord Jesus, thou hast promised that, if I would take this yoke, it would be easy, and if I would take this burden, it would be light. Thou hast called me to bear the burden and to wear the yoke. Let me have the joy and the peace."

Go to Christ so. Try this. Begin in earnest. Begin to put your whole life-force into the new ambitions that will arise from this mode of loving God and man. Change the current of your life. Now, though you believe in morality, and in spirituality, they are alternatives. They are intermittent. The force of your life now really flows out for the world that now is, and for the things of the world. But begin to live above this present world. Begin to lift your thoughts up so that the unseen shall become more vivid to you than the seen, and the spiritual more than the sensuous. Let there be a new ambition, a new aim, a new heart-love. Give a new direction to your thoughts and feelings. Attempt so to live a little while, and you will find that there is a yoke there, that there is a burden there, the one and the other. Go with that burden and that yoke, and say, "Lord Jesus, in the way of thine appointing I have attempted to walk." My dear brethren, Christ never commanded you to do any thing, that he did not stand in the path to help you to do it. If you want to love God, Jesus Christ stands close by, and says, "If you will take that yoke upon you, you shall learn of me; and I will give you rest. Come unto me. Come so." If you attempt to love your fellow-men with a disinterested benevolence, Christ says, "Are you coming to me? Will you take this yoke and this burden? Then you shall find rest to your souls." Are you willing to take this yoke, and live above the world while you are in it? Jesus Christ is standing and saying, "I will reveal myself unto you. Not as unto the world will I manifest myself unto you." And he will keep his word.

Go further. Do not shrink back, when you find, in the providence of God, that cares, and fears, and troubles are upon you; when you find yourself environed by those daily struggles which are incident to your social organization. Mother, whose household is heavier than you can bear, whose children are a burden that you can not carry, sometimes you seek relief by running to earthly friends, and sometimes you sleep off your trouble. There is many a sore heart—sore in the harness of daily life. In sickness, in nervous weakness, in despondency and discouragement, you are trying to live faithful to your husband, faithful to your children, faithful to your name and to yourself. And yet it seems to you every day as though the spirit of life would be

crushed out of you. You want to do right; but you can say, "The cloud is evermore over me, and life is a burden; and if it were not for my children, I would not care to live." How many there are—oh! sad commentary on life!—who say, "If it were not for one and another, I would be willing to die." And right in the midst of life, in the midst of youth, and in the plentitude of years, how many there are whose fears, and cares, and sorrows, and rasping experiences, are such that they would die if they could!

Are you willing to take those cares and those fears which God has put upon you as a yoke and as a burden, and to stand in them, and go to Christ and say, "Lord Jesus, I accept all these. Thou hast said, 'Come to me through cares and through burdens,' and I have come; and I shall die if there is not some help sent to me." Ah! the dark closet, how often does it prove to be the gate of heaven!

I knew a man proud and cultured, the child of religious associations and parentage, himself skeptical by theological mistraining, who, going out into life, at last came to the head of an immense public school in Philadelphia. There were some six hundred scholars in the school. They tasked his authority and they tasked his faith to the uttermost. One day—as he told me afterward—he came to the climax, and felt that that school was mastering him, that there was no more strength in himself, and that he should be crushed. He went back to his seat, and sat down, and opened the lid of the desk to hide his face, and, shutting his eyes, said, "Lord Jesus, I shall die if thou dost not help me!" And, said he, in relating the circumstance to me, "I rose from that place believing, for the first time in my life, that there was a God; and I threw my soul on him, and he held me up."

I do not believe there ever was a soul that went to Jesus with a yoke or a burden, saying, "I can not bear it: Jesus, succor me!" that Christ did not reveal himself to that soul. And oh! how blessed is a yoke or a burden, how blessed is a care or a sorrow, that draws a person away from himself, and into the arms of the Lord Jesus Christ. Oh! how base is that wealth that forfeits heaven. Oh! how poor is that love that cheats us of God's love. Oh! how unmanly is that ease which takes away the rest that remaineth for the people of God. Oh! how blessed are those tears that shall be wiped away from every eye by and by. Oh! how sweet are those cares which teach us to lean our head upon the bosom of the Beloved. Oh! how joyful are those sorrows which bring us to Him that is the Comforter of those that mourn upon earth.

Let the same line of thought be applied to men who are beset with their own passions, and who are under temptation. I know men that have fallen into the snare of strong drink. They see the better way; they hate the wrong; they suffer the torments of the damned, in their

luminous intervals; and they long to break their habits. I have known men that had been caught with salacious desires, and had gone into the house of the strange woman, which is the house of death; and their passions, set on fire of hell, could not be quenched by themselves. Still reforming, and still failing; still promising themselves, and still untrue to their own promises, the doubtful battle has been fought until their heart has become black within them; and they have said, "I am bound! I am bound! I would to God that I was free from these passions." There are men who have been caught with avarice. There are men who have been caught in the thief's snare, and in the liar's snare, and in the trail of ungodly men. There are men whose passions and appetites are making terrible war upon them. And the truth at times flashes on them, and the feeling comes over them, "Unless I am released from these terrific passions, they will carry me down to the chambers of death." And so they will.

I do not believe that a man, ordinarily speaking, who is originally endowed with very strong passions, and who has given loose to them, can be plucked out from the thrall, the hell, of these passions, except by the Hand that holds the very universe itself. But if a man, in the midst of these passions, instead of seeking his own strength, will say, "Lord Jesus, thou hast said, 'Come unto me, ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.' I am both burdened and crushed with my own sins, with my own wickedness, with my own meanness, and am bowed down and helpless. Thou hast said that if I would come and take thy yoke and learn of thee, I should find rest to my soul. I come. Yet I need help to take the yoke, and to get the burden on—the burden of purity, and the yoke of regularity and righteousness"—if any soul goes thus to God, do you think he will not reveal himself?

There came to me, last week, one whose bad ways I had known, and whom I had avoided, supposing that he was but a sponge; but having since January last maintained a better course, he came to me, and to my surprise spoke of his past life, of his degradation, and of his new purpose, and said, "The kindness that some friends have shown me has been very comforting and very encouraging." I sat there, and my heart trembled like jelly. I rebuked myself that I ever had any other thought than that he might be rescued. And as he went on, my heart went out toward him. And I said to myself, What would I not give if I could save this man? I, a selfish man, I, a proud man, I, a worldly man, I, burdened like himself—I, rising above my lower nature, felt my better nature asserting itself. And I longed to take him up in my arms, and out of the entanglements and temptations which beset him, and make a man of him. And do you suppose that I could feel this, and Christ feel nothing when one comes to him, saying, "Lord Jesus, have mercy on me!"

Do you remember, when from the gates of hell and damnation there came up one of those poor wretched creatures that all the world agree to tread under foot, and stood at the feet of Christ, wiping his feet with the hair of her head, how she was more to him than all that guest-chamber? The words that he spoke of comfort and of love to her are words that will go on sounding down through the ages of time, saying to every poor soul that wants to escape from its enemies, from the thrall of its passions, "Go to Jesus. There is heart there. There is a loving Saviour there. Do not give up. Do not go back. Never trust alone what other men can do, nor what you can do. Take the yoke. Take the burden. Put Christ to proof. Bring him to judgment." And in the last day, if Christ ever forsakes a man that wants to be saved, and that puts himself before him, then rise up in that day of judgment, and say, "I did come to thee, and thou didst cast me out!" The heavens will collapse, and the universe will dissolve; but there shall be no such thing as that. No man ever came to him and was cast out.

But these are enough instances to illustrate the distinction I make. You can not come to Christ speculatively; you can not come to him historically; but come to Christ in the actual practice of Christian feeling; in the actual struggle toward a Christian life. Propound to yourself a Christian character. Mark out for yourself Christian duties. Determine in your mind what things are right and what things are wrong in life; and at every step of hinderance and burden, at every step of temptation and thwarting, at every point of battle, call upon Christ. Look to him and trust in him. There will be earnestness and sincerity in that attempt to follow Christ, and no man will fail who makes it.

If these things be so, then, *first*, we see the miserable sentimentalism of the school of modern Christ-critics—the Della Cruscans of religion. I like liberality, but I do not like weakness; I like to see men free to think; but when men are free to think, I want them to think to some purpose. In one respect I am a liberal Christian, but in another respect I am not a liberal Christian. I believe in a God that has power; and I never could have any affinity with any system that had not power to awaken men's fears, and quicken men's consciences, and that, when they were awakened, had no power and no substance by which to take hold of them. I long for a theology, and I love a gospel, that has in it power to shake men; that has in it thunder, as well as rain and dew. Those Della Cruscan teachers that are all pulp, are like thin fogs hanging over shallow oceans. The old rugged doctrines of the schools may be too sharp here or there, and they may have wrecked many a sensitive nature; but, after all, those old rugged doctrines have in them power both for condemnation and for lifting up and consolation.

What we want, then, is this power. We want to stop men; for the whole world is rushing blindly onward. Wickedness everywhere is triumphant. We need power in the Gospel. We need a Christ that has power—a living Christ—a Christ revealed for the salvation of men individually, and thus collectively. "*Christ—the Wisdom of God, and the Power of God.*"

Secondly, I may remark upon the languid and temporizing ways by which men have been accustomed to seek religion—that is, to seek Christ. Their mode of doing it accounts for their want of success. There are thousands of men—and many in my hearing—who suppose that they have been, in one way or another, rather seeking religion for a good while.

Suppose a general, in giving an account to the government of a battle that he had fought, should say that he had an army of two thousand men over against his adversary; that on the whole he had rather been skirmishing with him; that he had done some things; that he had fired off a number of guns, hoping that by and by something would occur. Is that the way battles are fought? And yet, is not that the way the grand battle of the human soul is being fought? Can you conceive of the battle of a soul, in its selfishness and pride and worldliness, panting like the lion of Milton to get free? And can a soul break away from its thraldom in the indolent and languid way which most persons bring to the consideration? It bears no proportion in its soul-power and earnestness to the efforts which are made for lower and easier things. If your soul was worth gaining the ear of the Lord Jesus Christ, as much as you consider your earthly estate and honor worth gaining the ear of the magistrate, oh! how different would be the experience.

We find in the Bible the saying, "The kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force." Do you want to know what that means? Go to Washington, and you will see. When men want any thing, see how they go to get it. The capital of a republic "suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force." There are fifty men squabbling for every single office, every one having armed himself with all possible influence, direct and collateral; with every thing that can come from the head, every thing that can come from the heart, and——every thing else! See how night and day they plan, and combine, and labor, and wear out resistance, to get what? An office—the liberty of exile to some foreign country. When they mean ambition, when they mean wealth, when they mean power, when they mean influence, see how they seek it. When they mean the salvation of their souls, they curl themselves up in a sunny place, light their cigar, and read the corner of the newspaper, or dispute with their minister or their neighbor in respect to some tenet or doctrine. And they get up in

meetings and say that they are rather thoughtful on the subject of religion, on the whole! See men that are always dreaming, floating in their notions. They go to one church. Well, they do not like the music in that church, and so they will not stay there. They go to another church. On the whole, painted windows please them, and they stay there. At one church the minister is good, but the music is poor; and at another church the opposite is true. And so these men, as if they were in Fulton Market, go daintily about for tenderloins, for delicacies, for nice parts, and call that being moral, thoughtful, earnest! Shame on you! Shame on manhood, that a man should pretend that this is having moral impulse or moral earnestness! Where a man means religion, there is no need that he should miss religion. A man that means manhood has a road broad enough for a fool to find out at midnight. A man that means regeneration, repression of pride, mastery of selfishness, overthrow of filthy passions—the wearing out of those elements that come near wearing out his spirituality—do you suppose that such a man takes these *dilettante* methods of making it appear that he is seeking after Christ?

Do you ask me the reason why you have not found Christ? I tell you, it is because you do not want to; it is because you do not care. What would you think if some royal woman, cultured, and full of sensibility, should be sitting at her window; and some perfumed fop, passing on the other side of the street, and seeing her, should say to her, "Come down here: let me court you." What would you think of such an address as that? But it is the very address that you bring to the Lord of glory. Dainty, finical, critical, you do have an occasional moment in which you say, "Lord Jesus, if you will help me, I will be thine," patronizing him, and on the whole, flattering him. This you call seeking religion! Oh! the conceit of wickedness. Oh! the miserable folly of conceit. Oh! the self-deluding methods that men are pursuing, and baptizing with the name of religious thoughtfulness and religious exertion. A man who is crushed, a soul that is humbled, a man who feels that it is a matter of life and death, a man who has in himself a witness that he is dead in transgression and sin, and calls out for help, and feels that there is no help but in God, oh! how different is he. Oh! how earnest. Oh! how direct. And, blessed be God, how successful!

Let me speak also of the pity of the Saviour. Let me speak of the grandeur of that nature in him which looks on the sin of human life, waits for this experience, watches, and is infinitely helpful of it in all its wickednesses and dissipations. When I look at the inside of human life, I am alarmed. I think it is not safe for a man to look at human nature. There are some things which it is not safe for a man to think about. There are some things which it is not safe to be fami-

liar with. I have not strength to look upon the dark side of human nature. It would turn me sour. It would turn me into an uncharitable, critical spirit. I could not endure it.

Happening, one day, into a seed-store where there were a dozen young crocodiles in an aquarium, I came suddenly upon them, and turned with loathing from the reptiles. I see men that affect me just so, many times. Have you ever been into a natural history collection, and seen cages of snakes, the very odor of which made you shudder? Every thing that is in you abhors such a spectacle. And so I feel when I see corruption in courts; when I see corruption in lazar-houses; when I see the corruption of thieves in New-York; when I see the corruption of public men. Then, latent thunder rolls along the hills of my horizon. I have often and often said that the world is fortunate that I am not God. I have no such conception of the majesty and beauty of God as when I think that there is nothing that escapes his eye, and that he reads every individual heart through and through, and knows it in all its filthiness, in all its depths, in its unimaginable extent and scope—I had almost said, gloomy grandeur—of wickedness; as when I think that God waits for such wickedness, and thinks for it, as a mother thinks for a sick child, carrying it in his arms; as when I think that he will heal it, giving himself a sacrifice for it, suffering patiently, as a type and specimen of that suffering which he carries eternally, being not only the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world, but a perpetual sacrifice, that he may restore such wickedness to purity, and bring such lost ones back to himself. This is the character of the Lord Jesus Christ. And I say, with such an overhanging genius, with such a presiding divinity, with such a God and Saviour, need any man perish? need any man doubt whether he can be a victor in any conflict that is necessary for his soul? There is hope for all; there is hope for the poorest, for the weakest. It is the hope that springs not from the man's self, but from the help and faithfulness of his God.

I bring this Christ to you this morning—my Master, whom I have proved, and who has given me victories innumerable; hopes that light clear forward to the grave; faith that reaches sheer across the abyss, and illumines the city beyond. That Saviour who has fulfilled to me a thousand times his promises in sickness, in poverty in former days, in cares, in fears, in anxieties, in self-condemnations, in aspirations—that Saviour of whom I can say, "I know that my Redeemer liveth"—I bring him to you.

How do I know? If that organ sounds, I know that there is some man pressing the keys. If my heart gives out sounds, I know that there is something playing on it. And if there are tendencies and experiences which do not come from man's touch, or from my voli-

tion, I know that it is the supernal touch, and a divine influence resting upon me.

That Saviour whom I know, to whom I have committed my soul in well-doing, believing that he will keep that which I have committed to him in the day of redemption—that Saviour I bring to you. There is no need that any of you should perish. There is no need that any of you should be overborne in the struggle of life. There is no need that you should be less than a full man in Christ Jesus You do not need to abide on that doubtful, that misty ground of insincerity, that vague ground of ever-revolving and unsatisfying skepticism. There is for you a personal Saviour. It is in your power, if you will, to go to the Lord Jesus Christ. If you will take the yoke, and bear burdens, it will be in your power, by and by, to rise and say among your brethren, "I have found the Saviour. I know that my Redeemer liveth. Henceforth my life shall be hid with Christ in God."

"Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?" "Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us. For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord."

PRAYER BEFORE THE SERMON.

We draw near to thee, thou ascended Saviour, believing that thou art not rich for thyself alone, but that in power, in goodness, in wisdom, thou art rich for all that live, and that need thee. Thou art not dwelling in a central praise that whirls about thee, ministering to thine august selfishness. Thou art dwelling in praise, as a mother dwells among her little children that love her; as parents dwell in households where they are revered and rejoiced in. It is love that praises thee in heaven; and the ecstasy of delight and gladness overflows in words of praise and of love. Thou art not for those that are in heaven alone. Far out to the furthest bound of creation, where life is struggling to live, thou art felt; and wherever there is sentient being, thou art, as far as they can receive thee, interpreting thyself to them, and persuading them to dwell in thee. Where thy name is known, and where men have risen into companionship with thee, there art thou, speaking words strange and august with divine love. There the heaven shines with promises, as our heavens with stars. There thou art opening all the things that we do most desire, and tempting us to come and take them. Thou art most glorious in holiness; and that love which we have for things noble should lead us to thee. Every desire which we have for purity, all the admiration which we have had in men—this finds in thee that which it most needs—its perfectness, its ideal existence. Thou art strength to those that need, and that are weak. Thou art sympathy to those that are in lowliness, and seem shut off from the comfort and the consolation of companionship. Thou art infinitely compassionate to those that

have stumbled and fallen. To those whose consciences have risen up against them, and have become as jailers, and do torment them, bond-slaves of wrong-doing, thou art the Deliverer. To those that are wandering, and whose feet know not the path; who know not where to go; who are unsettled, and are seeking good hither and thither—to such lost and wandering sheep thou art the Shepherd, to seek them and to save them. Oh! that men had faith to discern what treasure of goodness is in thee; what resources of power are thine; what wondrous helpfulness thou hast; how thou art the all-nursing God, as well as the God of judgment; how thou art the pitying God, as well as the God of inflexible righteousness; how thou dost teach, as well as rebuke; how thou dost bear up in thine arms the trembling and the sinful, as well as carry the iron sceptre for thine adversary! Wondrous art thou; blessed in thy justice, in thy purity, and in thy truth. Thou art thyself the pledge that wickedness shall not dwell forever in thy realm. Sorrow, and sighing, and tears, and sickness shall flee away, and the former things shall be found no more, because thou art strong, and wise, and just—a God of righteousness and of judgment. Who shall abide thy coming? and who shall abide thine administration? Thou art a God of mercy, to heal the sinful, to bind up the wounded, to give life to the dead, to do all in all that they may become the sons of God.

Are there not in thy presence waiting souls that long have looked toward the sun's rising, but upon whom yet no light dawns? O Sun of Righteousness! come to such with healing in thy beams. Are there not those that have wandered up and down, saying, Who will do us any good? And amidst the dead members of old thoughts and theories, have they not found themselves unfed, as men that walk among bones that are scattered at the tomb's mouth?

O Lord Jesus! thou that didst meet her in the garden who could not for tears see who thou wert, and didst plead with thee to show her where was hidden the body of her Beloved—thou that didst by one word call her to life and joy, call by their names those that are wandering now; those that are heart-sick and heart-weary; those that have not been deceived by the emptiness of the world; those that have tried what could be done by sympathy, and what human praise could do, and what life in its fullness could minister, and who think of something nobler than these, they scarcely know what; who yearn for a higher life; who listen to all the specious words that paint the power of man to live above himself, and to take hold upon the eternal verities, and still, chasing bubbles, find them bursting in their hands.

Lord Jesus, thou art real; thou art living; thou art the Prince of ages. Ten thousand, yea, hundreds of thousands, of such thou hast called. Thou hast instructed their hearts and made them thine own. And thou art not old. On thy brow no wrinkles come with ages. Thou art the eternally young, the eternally living, without variableness or shadow of turning, yesterday, to-day, and forever the same. O thou that art life! come to those that in our time need that rescue which thou hast given to those aforetime.

And grant, we beseech of thee, that there may be some among us who have known the blessedness of thy love, that shall be heard singing the sweet hymns of Zion. Grant that there may be some that shall win others by their voice, and by the melody of their Christian love. Grant that there may be some hearts burning with gratitude, who can not but speak of what Christ hath done for them. Grant that there may be many who shall be led by the light of our experience to seek the Father's house. We beseech of thee that thou wilt accept the confession which we make of our unfaithfulness to thy cause, and to thee; of the langnidness of our love; of the in sufficiency of our service. Grant that we may love thee more and more, and more and more-make it plain to men that we have been with Jesus, and that there is the Anointed—that there is the power of God to forgive sin, and to heal the sinner.

And we beseech of thee that thou wilt bless all those in thy presence who come with their various interests this morning. Illumine the dark minded; cheer the despondingː give courage to those who are almost hopeless; give forgiveness to those who mourn over their sins. If there be any who wash thy feet with tears, and wipe them with the hairs of their head, forgive them. Grant that they may go and sin no more. Deliver all that are in the thrall of temptation. Give all those that are under burdens strength to bear their burdens. Give to those whom thou hast blessed in the midst of sunshine and flowers and dear delights, a heart to bear joy, and honor Christ in their gladness. Grant that we may take the law which thou hast prescribed for us, whatever it may be—whether it be of labor or of rest; whether it be a mighty going forth in the day of battle, or whether it be to stand. Whatever may be thy will, as interpreted in thy providence, may we rejoice to clothe our performance with all wisdom and love for Christ's sake. May we remember, whatever we are doing, that this world is but the shadow of real life; that the world to come is coming, and if we had ears to hear, already we could hear the sounds of angel footsteps that are approaching us. May we live as seeing Him who is invisible, and in a constant preparation for those joys of immortality which assuredly are ours. So may we take the sting away from care and grief; and so may we take away the hurtfulness of joy, that we may live as not abusing the privilege of our place and the gifts of our God.

And when at last the summons for our departure shall come, may it be to us as the unfolding of the banner and as the sound of the trumpet; and may we rush forth—not be borne languidly; and at last willingly, eagerly may we go forth to meet our Lord, and be present with Christ, which is better than life.

And to thy name shall be the praise of our salvation, forever and ever. *Amen.*

PRAYER AFTER THE SERMON.

We beseech of thee, O God! grant thy blessing to rest upon the hearts and the consciences to which the truth has been spoken. Oh! that those who seek for thee might find thee speedily. Oh! that there might be many who should seek that now are indifferent. Wilt thou awaken those who are indifferent. Bring to thee those that are alienated by evil works. Glorify thyself in re-establishing thine image upon those who by sin have effaced it. Grant that there may be many testimonies to thy saving grace in this congregation. We ask it, not because we are worthy, but in the name of the Beloved. *Amen.*

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Showing the condition of the Company on the 1st day of Jan., 1869.

ASSETS.

Cash, Balance in Bank,	$145,795 43
Bonds and Mortgages, being first lien on Real Estate,	1,178,965 00
Loans on Stocks, payable on demand,	409,662 00
United States Stocks, (market value,)	1,404,743 50
State and Municipal Stocks and Bonds, (market value,)	451,305 00
Bank Stocks, (market value,)	128,976 00
Interest due on 1st January, 1869,	38,503 17
Balance in hand of Agents and in course of transmission,	95,619 20
Bills Receivable, (for Premiums on Inland Risks, etc.,)	14,000 94
Other Property, Miscellaneous Items,	56,157 85
Premiums due and uncollected on Policies issued at Office,	6,873 40
Steamer Magnet and Wrecking Apparatus,	35,536 81
Government Stamps on hand,	144 00
Total,	$3,966,282 30

LIABILITIES.

Claims for Losses outstanding on 1st January, 1869,	$104,097 48
Due Stockholders on account of 27th, 28th, 29th Dividends,	2,740 00
	$106,837 48

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